*306. [The questioner (Shri Vijay Kumar Rupani) was absent. For answer *vide* page 34]

बहरीन में भारतीयों की मृत्यु

*307. **श्री प्यारे लाल खंडेलवाल:** क्या प्रवासी भारतीय कार्य मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या यह सच है कि बहरीन में 16 भारतीय की मृत्यु विदेशों में कार्यरत भारतीय कामगारों के प्रति सरकार के निराशाजनक रवैये को दर्शाती है;

(ख) क्या यह भी सच है कि "प्रवासी भारतीय कार्य मंत्रालय" का कार्य केवल प्रवासी भारतीय उद्योगपतियों तथा प्रमुख लोगों के सम्मेलन तक ही सीमित है;

(ग) यदि नहीं, तो सरकार द्वारा विदेशों में कार्यरत भारतीय कामगारों के कल्याण हेतु किए जा रहे प्रयासों का ब्यौरा क्या है; और

(घ) सरकार द्वारा प्रवासी कामगारों के कल्याण के लिए किए गए प्रयासों और उपलब्धियों का विगत तीन वर्षों का ब्यौरा क्या है?

प्रवासी भारतीय कार्य मंत्री (श्री वायालार रवि): (क) से (घ) एक विवरण सभा पटल पर रखा जाता है।

विवरण

(क) से (घ) बहरीन में भारतीय दूतावास ने सूचित किया कि 30-7-2006 को गुड़ाबिया, बहरीन में एक दो मंजिला इमारत में एक भयंकर आग लग गई थी जिसमें लगभग 220 भारतीय श्रमिक थे। 16 भारतीय नागरिक, जो सभी तमिलनाडु के थे, इस आग दुर्घटना में मारे गये। आग में 11 भारतीय नागरिक घायल हुए थे जिनका उपचार सलमानिया अस्पताल में किया गया और उन्हें उसी दिन छुट्टी दे दी गई। सूचना के अनुसार यह आग 30-7-2006 को 0200-0300 बजे के बीच बिजली के शॉट-सर्किट के कारण लगी। एक सौ छियानवे भारतीय श्रमिकों को दूसरे स्थान पर भेज दिया गया है। बहरीन सरकार ने इस आग दुर्घटना के कारणों का पता लगाने और क्या भारतीय श्रमिकों को उपलब्ध कराया गया आवास सुरक्षा और स्वास्थ्य मानदंडों के अनुरूप था, की जांच के आदेश दे दिये हैं। प्रवासी भारतीय कार्य मंत्रालय ने भारतीय दूतावास और तमिलनाडु सरकार के सहयोग से मृतकों के शव तमिलनाडु में उनके परिवारों को भेजने का प्रबंध किया था। बहरीन आग दुर्घटना एक दुर्भाग्यपूर्ण हादसा

था जिसमें 16 भारतीय श्रमिकों की बहुमूल्य जानें चली गई। मंत्रालय ने पहले ही मंत्री स्तर पर बहरीन सरकार को लिखा है कि आग में मरने वाले श्रमिकों के परिवारों और दुर्घटनाग्रस्त श्रमिकों को सहायता अनुदान का भुगतान किया जाए।

प्रवासी भारतीयों की समस्याओं और चिन्ताओं का समाधान करने के लिए मई 2004 में प्रवासी भारतीय कार्य मंत्रालय की स्थापना की गई थी। मंत्रालय के उत्तरदायित्वों में प्रवासी भारतीयों, भारत में प्रवासी भारतीयों द्वारा निवेश संवर्धन, विदेशी निवेश संवर्धन, बोर्ड के साथ परिचर्चा, विदेशी निवेश कार्यान्वयन प्राधिकरण और अन्य निवेश संवर्धन सम्बन्धित संस्थाओं से-सम्बन्धित सभी मामले शामिल हैं। इन कार्यों का निर्वहन करने के लिए मंत्रालय के प्रशासन आदेश के भाग के रूप में भारत और विदेशों में सम्मेलनों का आयोजन और उनमें भागीदारी की जाती है।

मंत्रालय, अन्य बातों के साथ-साथ, उत्प्रवास अधिनियम, 1983 को प्रशासित करता है तो संविदा आधार पर विदेशों में रोजगार के लिए भारतीय नागरिकों के उत्प्रवास की देखरेख करता है। उत्प्रवास महासंरक्षी विदेशों में भारतीय श्रमिकों के संरक्षण और कल्याण को सुनिश्चित करने के लिए उपाय करता है। 01.02.2006 से एक संशोधित और विस्तृत बीमा योजना, अर्थात्, प्रवासी भारतीय बीमा योजना, 2006 लागू की गई है जिसमें प्रत्येक उत्प्रवासी कामगार के लिए इस योजना के अन्तर्गत बीमा करवाना अनिवार्य है। मंत्रालय द्वारा एक महत्वपूर्ण पहल के रूप में राज्य सरकारों और अन्य औद्योगिक निकायों के सहयोग से कौशल उन्नतकरण कार्यक्रम चलाये जा रहे हैं जिससे प्रवासी भारतीय श्रमिकों को रोजगार के बेहतर अवसर मिल सकें और वे उनकी मजदूरी को बढ़ाने में सहायक हो सकें। इसके अतिरिक्त, विदेशों में भारतीय श्रमिकों के संरक्षण और कल्याण को सुनिश्चित करने के लिए उत्प्रवास अधिनियम, 1983 में व्यापक संशोधन करने का प्रस्ताव पहले ही विचाराधीन है। विदेशों में भारतीय श्रमिकों के लाभ के लिए मंत्रालय द्वारा अन्य अनेक उपाय किये जा रहे हैं जिनमें ई-प्रशासन की मार्फत उत्प्रवास प्रक्रिया को कारगार बनाना, प्रमुख श्रम आयातक देशों के साथ समझौता ज्ञापन पर हस्ताक्षर करना, और संभावित प्रवासी श्रमिकों में उनके अधिकारों और दायित्वों के बारे में जागरूकता सृजित करने के लिए प्रचार अभियान शामिल हैं।

Death of Indians in Bahrain

†*307. SHRI PYARELAL KHANDELWAL: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that death of 16 Indians in Bahrain has shown Government's indifferent attitude towards Indian workers working abroad;

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) whether it is also a fact that the job of Overseas Indian Ministry is restricted only to overseas Indian industrialists and conferences of prominent persons;

(c) if not, the details of the efforts being made by Government for the welfare of Indian workers working abroad; and

(d) the details of the efforts made for the welfare of overseas workers by Government, with achievements, during the last three years?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) to (d) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) to (d) The Indian Embassy in Bahrain reported that on 30.07.2006, a major fire broke out in a two-storey building in Gudabiya, Bahrain, which housed about 220 Indian labourers. Sixteen Indian nationals, all from Tamil Nadu, died in this fire accident. Eleven Indian nationals were injured in the fire and were treated in Salmania Hospital and discharged the same day. The fire is reported to have broken out between 0200-0300 hrs. on 30.07.2006 due to an electric short-circuit. One hundred and ninety-six Indian workers have since been shifted to another accommodation. The Government of Bahrain has ordered an enquiry into the causes that led to this fire accident and to verify whether the lodging provided to the Indian workers was in conformity with housing safety and health criteria. The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, in co-ordination with the Indian Embassy and the Government of Tamil Nadu, made arrangements to send the bodies of the deceased to the respective families in Tamil Nadu. The Bahrain fire tragedy was an unfortunate accident in which 16 precious lives of Indian workers were lost. The Ministry has already written to the Government of Bahrain at the Minister's level urging grant of ex-gratia payments to the families of these workers who perished in the fire and to those injured.

The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs was established in May, 2004 to address the problems and concerns of overseas Indians. The Ministry's responsibilities include all matters relating to overseas Indians, promotion of investment by overseas Indians in India, interacting with the Foreign Investment Promotion Board, the Foreign Investment

Implementation Authority and other investment promotion related institutions. To discharge these functions, it is part of the Ministry's mandate to organise and participate in conferences in India and overseas.

The Ministry, *inter alia*, administers the Emigration Act, 1983 which deals with emigration of Indian citizens for overseas employment on contractual basis. The Protector- General of Emigrants takes measures to ensure the protection and welfare of the Indian workers abroad. With effect from 01.02.2006, a revised and comprehensive insurance package, *viz.*, Pravasi Bhartiya Bima Yojana, 2006 has been introduced which makes it mandatory for every emigrant workers to have the insurance cover under this Scheme. Skill upgradation programmes, in collaboration with State Governments and other industry bodies, to enable overseas Indian workers seek better employment opportunities and to help them move up the wage chain is also an important initiative being unertaken by the Ministry. In addition, to ensure protection and welfare of Indian workers abroad, a proposal to comprehensively amend the Emigration Act, 1983 is already underway. Several other measures for the benefit of Indian workers abroad have been undertaken by the Ministry which include streamlining of the emigration process through E-governance, signing of Memorandum of Understanding with the major labour importing countries and a publicity campaign to create awareness amongst potential overseas workers on their rights and obligations.

श्री प्यारे लाल खंडेलवाल: माननीय सभापति जी, मैंने बहरीन में जलकर मर गए भारतीयों के बारे में सवाल पूछा था। सरकार ने जवाब दिया है कि 16 श्रमिक जलकर मर गए, क्योंकि शार्ट सर्किट से वहां पर आग लग गई थी। भारत से खाड़ी के देशों में, जिसमें बहरीन भी सम्मिलित है, या तो सरकार या ठेकेदार और उद्योगपति मजदूर ले जाते हैं। जब मजदूर ले जाए जाते हैं तो उन्हें कई प्रकार के लालच और प्रलोभन दिए जाते हैं, लेकिन जब वे वहां पहुचते हैं तो उनके साथ अमानवीय व्यवहार होता है-उनके रहने की जगह ठीक नहीं होती है, उनकी सर्विस कंडीशंस ठीक नहीं होती है, उनके लिए बाकी व्यवस्थाएं और स्वास्थ्य इत्यादि की भी चिंता नहीं की जाती। मैं यह जानना चाहता हूं माननीय मंत्री जी से कि यह जो घटना हुई, इसमें जो लोग मारे गए उन लोगों को लेकर जाने वाली एजेंसी कौन सी थी और जो मारे गए हैं, उनके लिए मुआवजे की जो बहरीन सरकार से मांग की गई है, वह मुआवजा उनको कब तक दिलाने के लिए सरकार उनसे वायदा ले रही है?

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Sir, the answer has been given correctly that 16 persons from Tamil Nadu died and 11 persons got injured in the

incident. It is true that a kind of exploitation is going on in collaboration with the unscrupulous recruiting agents in India and some other persons, the so-called sponsors, in the Gulf countries, including Bahrain. So, the Government is now proposing to have an MoU signed with Gulf countries which can stipulate the conditions of the workers who go there. This is a very important matter and we are taking all the steps, including a proposal to amend the Emigration Act, 1983. So, after only these steps are taken, we can correct these things. I agree with you that there are certain problems.

श्री प्यारे लाल खंडेलवाल: माननीय सभापति जी, कदम उठाए जा रहे हैं, यह कहा गया है यह समस्या आज की नहीं है, वर्षों पुरानी हैं। सरकार कदम उठा रही है, यह आश्वासन तो हमेशा मिलता है, लेकिन मैं यह जानना चाहता हूं कि अभी तक ऐसे कौन से कदम उठाए गए, क्योंकि मंत्री जी ने स्वयं स्वीकार किया है कि शोषण हो रहा है, तो इस शोषण को रोकने के लिए अभी तक कौन से ठोस कदम उठाए गए हैं, यह मैं माननीय मंत्री जी से जानना चाहता हूं?

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Sir, earlier also, one hon. Member has asked the question about the compensation part of it. The Tamil Nadu Government has given Rs. 2 lakh as compensation to the family of every deceased. The Government of India has introduced, as you know, the Pravasi Bhartiya Bima Yojana, where this amount has been enhanced to Rs. 5 lakhs for those who have gone through the protected emigrants route. So, that is also there.

As far as the other thing is concerned, we have already written to the Government of Bahrain through the Ambassador, through the Ministry of External Affairs, regarding the compensation from this company. We are trying to get that as per the legal process of that country.

And, as far as the other part of the question is concerned, yes, we had a conference in Doha. I called all the eight ambassadors as early as on March 20th, discussed the problems of the workers and we came to a certain conclusion. Thereafter, we have moved to amend the Act as well as to make the law to be strict and also to take all the steps to protect our workers going there. This is in the process.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Hon. Chairman, Sir, the hon. Minister, while returning from Malaysia yesterday, gave a press interview in Chennai. He stated that some unscrupulous people, in the name of recruitment, take people away and leave them in lurch in those countries,

especially Malaysia. It is a serious matter. I am very glad that he said so. From southern part of India, lots of people go to the Gulf countries. Kerala is one among them from where the hon. Minister comes. He knows their plight. The senior hon. Member has mentioned about the kind of ordeal the people working there face, and their living conditions. Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether they would like to create a separate cell in the Embassy for the purpose of taking care of the welfare of the people of Indian origin working in various gulf countries and other countries.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Sir, he is right, I have been to Kuala Lumpur and have had discussion with the concerned Ministers, and the Minister of HRD has promised that he will agree for a Memorandum of Understanding on the workers' recruitment. They are also trying to centralise the recruitment in that country. Sir, it is a very good proposal. I am waiting for the visit of the hon. Minister to this country in October.

As far as the second part is concerned, it is necessary. Yes, Sir. There is a proposal to open the NRI centres at three places. As it is a proposal only, Sir, it is still going on. It is in the gulf countries, in Malaysia, and also one in Western America. This is the beginning, Sir. The proposal has been mooted. It can deal separately with the issues of NRIs as well as the NRI workers.

SHRIMATI S.G. INDIRA: Sir, I appreciate the Minister's immediate action in this Bahrain incident. In the reply, he has mentioned that the Ministry has already written to the Government of Bahrain regarding the *ex-gratia* payment to the deceased persons' families. Also, in the media, the hon. Minister has mentioned that he is going to write to the Government of Bahrain to take action against that particular employer who was the cause of this incident. Apart from this monetary benefit, what action have the Government taken against that particular employer?

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Sir, at the Government level as well as the Ambassador level, we have taken this issue seriously. The Prime Minister of Bahrain along with the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Municipal Affairs visited the spot. The Prime Minister himself announced an enquiry into this incident. The enquiry has already started looking into the causes of this incident.

Regarding prosecution of the employer violating living conditions of workers, we are pursuing that matter. We have already filed a complaint

there as per the laws of that country. I hope, Sir, things will move, and we are hoping for positive results.

श्रीमती विप्लव ठाकुर: शुक्रिया सर, मैं माननीय मंत्री जी से जानना चाहती हूं कि हमारे यहां के मज़दूरों को जो कंपनीज़ बाहर लेकर जाती हैं, यह केस केवल तमिलनाडु का ही नहीं है, हिमाचल प्रदेश के मज़दूर भी बाहर जाते हैं, राजस्थान के भी जाते हैं, सभी राज्यों से कई लोग काम करने के लिए बाहर जाते हैं, लेकिन जो कंपनीज़ इनको लेकर जाती हैं, क्या सरकार ने उनका पूरा डाटा रखा हुआ है? क्या सरकार उनसे यह बात कर सकती है कि ऐसे लोगों की सेक्योरिटी या इन्श्योरेंस इत्यादि यहीं पर हो जाए और इसके लिए गवर्नमेंट अपने लैवल पर उनसे कुछ पैसा रख ले, क्या गवर्नमेंट इस बारे में कुछ सोच रही है?

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Sir, according to the Emigration Act of 1983, there should be registered agents. There are 1115 registered agents. But, Sir, there are a large number of unregistered persons, who claim to be agents or sub-agents. They are the main people who try to cheat people in the villages by offering them lots of facilities and employment oppotunities. Series of complaints have been received by me many times regarding extraction of huge amounts from these poor people. That is why, Sir, in collaboration with the State Governments, we are moving ahead in whatever way we can prevent this exploitation. We are also in discussion with the Home Ministry and Ministry of External Affairs.

SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT: Sir, the tragic death of 16 Indians in Bahrain has focussed attention on the extreme vulnerability of our workers going abroad. A large number of these workers happen to be women. We have been that an increasing number of women, even from the Minister's home State, are going abroad to these countries as domestic workers, as nurses etc. And there are some very specific problems that women workers face. Cases of sexual abuse, exploitation and cheating have been brought to light. Therefore, what I would like to know from the Minister is, without circumscribing the rights of the women workers to go abroad to work, what are the specific measures that his Minister is taking to afford protection and a sense of security to our women who are forced to go abroad because they do not have those opportunities in our own country.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Sir, I am in agreement with the observation of the hon. Member regarding the plight of women workers. As it is today, Sir, two or three conditions are there. One condition is, women should be above the age of 30 years and every request for a housemaid should be

attested by the concerned embassy. Even with this condition, it is circumvented by the unscrupulous agents and these people go and live with problems. I myself had to ask one lady, in one country, to go to shelter and requested them to send her back to India. The Ministry is taking steps. We are in consultation with the National Commission for Women.

SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT: I asked about what steps you have taken.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Sir, I am telling you that. Two options are before me—either we ban it totally or to have a regulation. (*Interruptions*) We also don't want total ban on that. So, Sir, I can offer that we will consult the lady Members as much as possible and also the National Commission for Women to formulate a policy. (*Interruptions*)

SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT: Sir, what is this answer? (*Interruptions*)

श्री शरद यादव: सर, इनसे जो पूछा गया है, उसका जवाब तो यह दे ही नहीं रहे हैं।

MR. CHAIRMAN: You don't want to consult...(*Interruptions*)...Next, Shri Amar Singh...(*Interruptions*)...

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Sir, many complaints come to me. The Ministry will have to take steps. Proposal has been made. Every woman who goes abroad should be in touch with the Indian embassy.

SHRI A. VIJAYARAGHAVAN: Sir, that is the practice now and that is the problem. People are going there. They don't have any register or account. (*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please take your seat...(*Interruptions*)...Shri Amar Singh.

SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT: I am sorry to hear this answer to such a sensitive issue.

श्री अमर सिंह: सभापति जी, आपके माध्यम से मैं मंत्री जी से पूछना चाहूंगा कि क्या सरकार ने भारतीय कामगारों को उग्रवादियों द्वारा उठा कर ले जाने तथा बाद में उनको मार दिए जाने के संबंध में कोई नीति तैयार की है? यदि की है तो उसका विवरण क्या है? पिछले दो सालों में ईराक और अफगानिस्तान में कार्यरत जो भारतीय कामगार मारे गए हैं, उनका विवरण क्या है और सरकार ने उनके परिवार वालों को क्या मुआवज़ा दिया है?